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ABSTRACT

This study examines patron preference for abridged versus unabridged audiobooks, looking at patron usage over time and noting any changes in preference and why they occurred. A survey was conducted at the four branches of the Geauga County Public Library System (Geauga County, Ohio) with a random sample of adult patrons. Of the 274 surveys distributed to patrons who were checking out audiobooks during the designated two-week period, 225 (82%) were completed and returned. Findings indicated that the unabridged format was favored by over half of the participants, while the abridged format was favored by only 13%. In addition, over 75% of the patrons said that they would like to see more unabridged audiobooks in the library collection. Thirty-five percent favored more abridged selections. Of the 225 participants, 65% were female and 32% were male. The majority of respondents fell inside the age range of 36 to 54 years old. The genre that was most favored was mysteries, and the mystery genre was the most popular choice when patrons were asked what categories of audiobooks they would like to see more of in the library. Also popular were best sellers, biographies, history, and general/current fiction. There is some evidence that suggests that patrons who have been using audiobooks longer have a preference for the unabridged format, and that patrons who initially preferred abridged formats or who didn't have a preference, tended to change their preference to unabridged over time. Appendices include the survey, cover letter and responses from the 225 participants to the open-ended question "What categories of audiobooks would [you] like to see more of in the library?" (Contains 29 references.) (AEF)

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AUDIOBOOK FORMAT: A PATRON'S CHOICE

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

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Kelly C. Connors

November, 1999

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade of the 20th century, audiobooks have become a common staple in almost all public libraries. The growth of the audiobook industry has spurred a great variety of genre including both fiction and non-fiction offerings. One of the ways in which patrons select audiobooks is by format. In 1990, Library Journal conducted a survey to indicate patron preference. It was noted, "that audio users are sharply divided, as a whole, in their preference for abridged vs. unabridged programs" (Annichiarico 1991, 37). The hectic lifestyles and longer commutes of many people play a role in their use of audiobooks for both pleasure and self-improvement.

Public libraries have limited audio/visual (AV) budgets. One decision that must be made is how to allocate funds for audiobooks. How much money should be earmarked for abridged formats and how much for unabridged formats? Patron preferences are an important component in these decisions.

This study will attempt to study patron preference for abridged vs.unabridged audiobooks. It will look at patron usage over time and note any changes in preference and why they occurred.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine how audiobook format choice (abridged vs. unabridged) changes over time. A patron survey was conducted at Geauga County Public Library in Geauga County, Ohio. The study gathered data about patron use of audiobooks and preferences for a particular format. Although many factors may influence the patron preference (abridged vs. unabridged), it was predicted that long term

(one year or longer), users of audiobooks would show a greater preference for the unabridged format. The results from this study were gathered from a random sample of adults who use the Geauga County Public Library system. Adults were defined as 18 years of age or older who currently have a library card. The questionnaire was self-administered and obviously limited to patrons who chose to participate.

Definition of Terms

Audiobook - defined as an electronically recorded book on audiocassette. It can either be of a fiction or a non-fiction nature using a reader/readers with the possible addition of sound effects and background music. A cassette player either in the car, home or portable would be used in the playback of an audiobook. No compact disc usage will be studied.

Unabridgement or unabridged - defined as the "complete" text of a book recorded on to audiotape for actual audiobook.

Abridgement or abridged - defined as the "edited" version or cut version of the text of a book recorded on to audiotape for actual audiobook.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review for this proposal was completed by searching various databases, professional periodicals and online catalogs. The key topics covered were audiobook usage and the abridged vs. unabridged format. Although format and usage have been discussed during the past 15 years, no studies have been found concerning patron preference changes involving the abridged vs. unabridged format.

In 1985, Library Journal conducted a mini-survey about library use of audiobooks. The survey found that users of audiobooks are commuters and vacationers, or people who "drive a lot". "Library collections of audiocassettes of books range widely over subject and genre. Most include both fiction and nonfiction, and most prefer readings of the entire, unabridged text." One librarian from the study commented that "patrons listen to recorded books either because they are physically unable to read, or because they don't have the time to read, or prefer to do something else while listening (garden, paint, etc.)" (Burns 1985, 38).

The late 1980's were a time of growth for this new medium. Format choices were often debated. In a 1989 Library Journal article, Kimberly Olson Fakih discusses the abridged vs. unabridged format. Fakih contends that the term "commuter" and the exploding usage of audiobooks began to come to the forefront of the profession. Usage of audiobooks was at an all time high. The preference seemed to be to have any materials on the shelf. Patrons wanted both the abridged and unabridged format. Fakih argues that commuters have found this medium and were taking out audiobooks at record numbers. As one librarian in the article noted, "Audiotapes soothe the jangled nerves and it sure

beats pulling out a gun!" Another librarian noted, "people are clamoring for the abridged, because the world is in a hurry." The storyline and number of listening hours are important. When a tape runs 20-25 hours, keeping track of plot can be a challenge. (Fakih 1989, 39)

Mark Annichiarico from Library Journal discussed abridged vs. unabridged in his 1991 article on spoken word audio. He noted the 1990 Library Journal survey, which included 372 participants. Three hundred and fourteen libraries responded to a questionnaire about patron preference and format. Annichiarico found that 37.6 percent claimed their patrons preferred unabridged audiobooks, while 32.2 percent reported a preference for abridged audiobooks. Packaging and pricing were factors in the library's decision to purchase either abridged or unabridged formats. Of the 314 respondents, 157 said that higher price was the biggest drawback to unabridged audiobooks. "They just don't generate circulation to justify the expense" (Annichiarico 1991, 38).

In 1992, Helen Aron obtained permission from Books-On-Tape, Inc., to conduct a random survey of approximately 1,000 subscribers. The survey results found that best selling fiction was the most popular genre, followed by the classics, mysteries, adventure, war and history, and biography. About half of the respondents borrowed audiobooks from their public library. Aron noted, "About 80% or the respondents usually listened to audiocassette books while they were driving a car" (Aron 1992, 209).

Preston Hoffman's 1991 Library Journal article mentioned demographics. He noted that:

> Audiobooks are often thought to be almost exclusively a habit of yuppies with a car tape player and long commutes, and it is true that this tends to be a thinking person's medium, but many of our audiobook patrons are truck drivers. To a great extent it seems that awareness of the availability of (especially) unabridged audiobooks, like many library services, is the key to a broad patron base (Hoffman 1991, 43).

By the early1990's, audiobooks were a common item in American libraries. Tangorra notes that, although format issues were still discussed, it was believed that patrons should have the choice. Librarians still tended to lean toward the unabridged format. The biggest selection factor against this format was cost. Publishers Weekly noted that "patron preference for unabridged was at an all time high and selection justification was becoming more pronounced" (Tangorra, 1992, 66). A profile of the audiobook user suggested a person who is well educated and has disposable income. These people are readers but utilize audiobooks for their daily commute or while exercising. Seth Gershel, vice-president Simon & Schuster Audio noted, "that while in many segments of the book business experienced a downturn in sales, the audiobook business was up by about 14% over the previous year 1991" (Gershel 1992, 64). Unabridged audiobooks continued to expand. Longer formats were gaining in popularity (Tangorra 1992, 66). As Annichiarico notes, "All the rhetoric aside, both abridged and unabridged audiobooks have a place in public libraries. The key for materials selectors is to determine a proper balance. Public libraries concerned with circulation figures would do well to survey their audio users on tastes and preferences regarding genres and whether they favor abridged or full-length audiobooks" (Annichiarico 1992, 44).

Sheldon Kaye, in a 1994 Library Journal article, notes that "a 1993 study by the Audio Publishers Association (APA) showed that the percentage of households that used or purchased spoken word audio during the previous year had grown to 17 percent - a figure that is double that of six years ago" (Kaye 1994, 34). As the audio industry continued to see such startling growth, the patron profile became very important. Public library audio/visual budgets continued to expand following the increase of circulation statistics and patron demand. Understanding audiobook user preference is the key to collection development and better service. According to Kaye, "The following arguments are among the most popular in favor of abridgement; low initial cost; patron demand; simultaneous release with hardcover publication; shorter length supports commuting time. Unabridged recordings have these advantages: patron demand; integrity of author's text; sturdier packaging; longer shelf life, which translates into lower cost per circulation" (Kaye 1994, 35). Another sure sign of growth was the announcement that Baker & Taylor (the biggest distributor of audiobooks to libraries) were increasing audiobook business 40-45% with retailers (Kopka 1994, 32).

In the January 1995 issue of Wilson Library Bulletin, Preston Hoffman noted, "I remain convinced the abridged book is a transitional form, destined to join the junk heap of publishing history like condensed texts, once very popular" (Hoffman 1995, 45). While this notion has been popular with many librarians preferring unabridgement, the findings suggest that both abridged and unabridged have a place on the library shelves.

As the demand for audiobooks increased more and more librarians were addressing the patron preference question. In 1996, the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana noted that the format question was split about 50/50. "Each year the

same survey is distributed with little change in interest, but more customers ask for unabridged tapes. People new to audiobooks do not seem to know the difference, but once they become 'audiophiles', most opt for the unabridged". "The demand was for fiction, primarily suspense and mystery" (Jones 1996, 114).

Another consideration is the cost of audiobooks. As Veldhuis notes, "As library materials budgets continue to tighten, it is useful to know that the cost of audiobooks has actually declined during the past decade.... The 1995 edition of the Bowker Annual reported the average price of an audiocassette was $9.34 in 1980, compared to $8.82 in 1994" (Veldhuis 1996, 117).

In a 1996 article about abridged audiobooks, Mark Annichiarico noted the debate still rages over abridged vs. unabridged and what that means to selection criteria. Some libraries refuse to buy abridged audiobooks. "One of the problems with abridgements is that they're like fresh fruit: they have a very limited shelf life...some books lend themselves to abridgement. You're not going to lose the literary merits of Judith Krantz if you abridge her novels" (Annichiarico 1996, 33). Again the issue of patron preference is important. The use of individual patron surveys concerning this issue may prove to help librarians in selection policy.

In the May 1997 issue of Library Journal, it was noted that audiobooks had gained a shelf in the library and had become a very popular format. The debate over abridged vs. unabridged was cooling and librarians were responding to community tastes and preferences. "For many, that means they buy only one format or the other; for some they buy both" (Fialkoff 1997, 62).

The 1998 Library Journal/Cahners Research survey of 486 libraries, showed that AV budgets are growing and that the average growth is about 53%. When genre was examined the survey showed that, "The audiobook collections at libraries are about three-quarters fiction and one quarter nonfiction. Men often resist fiction, so they seek self-help and business books while they drive." Popular authors include John Grisham, Danielle Steel, Sue Grafton, Tom Clancy and Patricia Cornwell. When format was explored, the survey found that "Most libraries couldn't provide specific figures a sign that they are increasingly less devoted to one format. Patrons are divided, some want every word, while others want a book they can finish in one stretch" (Oder 1998, 30).

According to Rosenblum, in 1999 about 21% of American households listen to audiobooks. "From 1990 to 1998, the cumulative sales growth of audiobooks was 360%." The growth of companies offering unabridged audiobooks has certainly helped its positive position in terms of patron preference. The more audiobooks you have on the shelves, the more chance a patron can sample the product. Rosenblum argues that, "the continuing strength and growth in unabridged is remarkable, we're seeing an almost month-by-month increase in what we release in unabridged productions, and that is helping offset flatter areas of the business, such as the backlist." Abridged remains the most popular format. "The major publishers are now generally releasing 20% to 30% of their new titles in both abridged and unabridged formats" (Rosenblum 1999, 42).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A self-administered questionnaire was used to conduct the survey. The survey took place during a two-week period at the Geauga County Public Libraries in Geauga County, Ohio. A total of 400 surveys were distributed to the four library branches and each branch received 100 color-coded surveys. Surveys were color-coded to identify each participating library branch. Surveys were distributed by circulation clerks to adult patrons who were checking out audiobooks. A cover letter explaining the survey was attached to each (See Appendix B). A collection box for completed surveys was placed at each circulation desk and participating patrons were asked to place their completed surveys in the box. Only the researcher had access to the completed surveys. Signage and directions were identical for each library branch. Surveys were numbered after collection for accurate data count and to identify open-ended questions.

The survey consisted of 12 questions and was drafted by the researcher. It included questions on patron format preference, length of time as audiobook user, demographics and some open-ended questions. A comments/suggestions question was added, to allow patron personal comments concerning audiobooks at the Geauga County Public Libraries (See Appendix A).

The key research question in this survey is whether patron preference for abridged or unabridged audiobook format changes over time. Do audiobook users who have listened longer, prefer one format over the other? Another research question is which format is currently preferred by patrons, abridged or unabridged.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Four hundred surveys were distributed to the participating libraries. Of the 400 surveys, 274 (68%) were distributed to audiobook adult patrons who were checking out audiobooks during that two-week period. The number of returned completed surveys was 225, making that a return of 82%.

Demographics

Of the 225 total responses, 147 were female or 65%. The number of male respondents was 72 or 32%. (Table 1). The results from this study were similar to the results from a 1995 Audio Publishers Association, "with a 12% response rate it found that 69% of spoken-audio listeners are women" (Kopka 1995, 27).

Table 1 - Gender		
Gender	Number	Percent
Female	147	65
Male	72	32
No response	6	3

The age group most heavily represented was from 46-55 (Table 2). This age group represented 29% of the total 225 participants. Another age group that had a larger participation ratio was the 56-65 category. Twenty-four percent were from this age group and 23% of the participants were from the 36-45 age group. Therefore, the majority of participants (76%) were 36-65 years of age. The smallest number of participants (5%) was from the 18-25 age group. Only 6% of the respondents were in the 26-35 age category.

Table 2 - Age		
Age	Number	Percent
18-25	11	5
26-35	15	6
36-45	51	23
46-55	66	29
56-65	53	24
66+	23	10
No response	6	3

Circulation

Respondents were asked to check off the number of audiobooks that they had taken out in the last 60 days (Table 3). The number of participants who took out more than 10 audiobooks was 95 or 42%. Twenty-one percent had only taken out 1-3 audiobooks in the past 60 days. This table suggests that almost half of the participants were heavy users during the last 60 days. Ninety-one participants (40%) were light users and only took out 1-6 audiobooks in the last 60 days.

Table 3 - Recent Circulation of Audiobooks		
Number of Audiobooks Checked Out in Last 60 Days	Number	Percent
1 - 3	47	21
4 - 6	44	19
7 - 10	38	17
More than 10	95	42
No response	1	1

Preferences for Genre

Participants were instructed to check up to three categories of fiction and non-fiction selections they prefer. The most popular category selected was mystery/suspense (Table 4). Sixty-eight percent of the total participants said that they preferred to listen to this category. The next popular category selected was best sellers, which was selected on 52% of the surveys. Biographies were also another popular category; forty-four percent

preferred this genre. The fourth most popular category was history at 43%, followed by general/current fiction, which was favored by 37%. One-fourth of the respondents selected general non-fiction and classics. Both action/adventure and romance were selected by 21% of the respondents. All of the remaining categories were selected by less than 20% of the participants.

Helen Aron's 1992 survey found that the most popular genre was best selling fiction followed by the classics, mysteries, adventure, war and history, and biography. The results of this survey are similar to Aron's results with the exception of the classics genre. The classics were not as popular with the Geauga County Library participants.

Table 4 - Genre Preference

Categories	Number	Percent
Mystery/suspense	153	68
Best seller	118	52
Biography	98	44
History	96	43
General/current fiction	83	37
Self help	60	27
General non-fiction	57	25
Classics	56	25
Action/adventure	48	21
Romance	48	21
Science fiction	42	19
Other	32	14
How-to	30	13
Comedy	28	12
Inspirational	28	12
Foreign language	17	8
Travel	16	7
Western	15	7
Old radio shows	13	6
Poetry	2	1

Length of Audiobook Use

Users of more than 5 years made up 43% of the total number of participants (Table 5). Another 22% had been listening to audiobooks 3 to 5 years. Therefore, 65% of the surveyed participants had been listening to audiobooks for at least 3 years. Seventeen percent had listened to audiobooks for 1 year or less. Another 18% had listened for 1 to 2 years.

Table 5 - Length of Audiobook Use		
Length of Time as an Audiobook User	Number	Percent
Less than 6 months	19	8.5
6 months to 1 year	19	8.5
1 to 2 years	40	18
3 to 5 years	50	22
More than 5 years	97	43

Format Preference

Participants were asked if they would like to see more abridged (edited version) or unabridged (complete version) audiobooks in the library collection (Table 6). Of the 225 total number of participants, 172 or 77% said they would like to see more unabridged audiobooks in the library. Seventy-eight or 35% would like to see more abridged audiobooks in the library. Over half of the 225 participants stated that they did not want to see more abridged audiobooks in the library. Only 12% said that they would not like to see more unabridged audiobooks in the library.

Table 6 – Preference for Additions to Collection					
Like to See More Abridged Audiobooks in Library	Number	Percent	Like to See More Unabridged Audiobooks in Library	Number	Percent
Yes	78	35	Yes	172	77
No	122	54	No	28	12
No response	25	11	No response	25	1

Over half of the respondents or 54% currently favor the unabridged format; only 31% prefer the abridged format (Table 7). Another interesting finding shows that 32% of the participants do not have a format preference.

The results from this study are dramatically different from Annichiarico's 1991 article discussing the 1990 Library Journal survey. That survey found that 37.6% of patrons preferred unabridged audiobooks while 32.2% preferred abridged. The Geauga County Public Library survey indicated a much higher preference for the unabridged format.

In 1996, the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana found that the audiobook format question was split 50/50. Although the Geauga County survey showed a similar response for the unabridged format, the preference for the abridged format was lower.

Table 7 – Current Audiobook Preference

Type of Audiobook Preference Now	Number	Percent
Unabridged	121	54
Abridged	31	13
No preference	72	32
No response	1	1

Participants were asked which format they preferred when they first started listening to audiobooks (Table 8). For their initial audiobook preference, 36% favored the unabridged format and only 17% favored the abridged format. Forty-three percent reported that they had no initial preference in audiobook format. A total of 8 participants or 4% did not respond to this question.

Table 8 – Initial Audiobook Preference		
First Type of Audiobook Preference	Number	Percent
Unabridged	82	36
Abridged	38	17
No preference	97	43
No response	8	4

Table 9 compares initial format preference to current format preference. Ninety-seven participants initially had no format preference. While 57% of these users still have no preference, 33% now favor the unabridged format, and only 10% now favor the abridged format. Of the 38 participants who initially preferred the abridged format, 26% now like to listen to unabridged audiobooks. Another 21% now have no preference. None of the 82 respondents who initially favored unabridged changed their preference to abridged. Only 6% of the 82 respondents now have no preference. This seems to show that preference does change over time but only for those respondents who initially preferred the abridged format or who did not have a preference. In both cases, there was a tendency to shift to the unabridged format.

Table 9 - Initial Format Preference vs. Current Format Preference						
	Current Preference					
	Unabridged		Abridged		No Preference	
Initial Preference	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Unabridged (82)	77	94	0	0	5	6
Abridged (38)	10	26	20	53	8	21
No Preference (97)	32	33	10	10	55	57

* Eight responses were blank for initial preference

Table 10 looks at the relationship between length of time as an audiobook user and the current audiobook format preference. For respondents who have been using audiobooks for less than 6 months, only 28% favored the unabridged format. The majority of this group, or 55%, had no preference. Seventeen percent of this group

favored the abridged format. This group had the lowest preference for the unabridged format. The groups who have been listening to audiobooks longer had a much stronger preference for unabridged audiobooks, ranging from 48% to 63%. These groups also had a smaller rate of no preference than the group that has been listening less than 6 months. Table 10 does not show any evidence that preference for the unabridged format continues to increase after the first 6 months, but the period between 6 months to 1 year does seem to be critical. Sixty-three percent of those listening for 6 months to one year favored the unabridged format while only 28% of those listening less than 6 months preferred unabridged.

Table 10 - Length of Time as Audiobook User & Audiobook Preference Linked

	Unabridged		Abridged		No Preference	
Length	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than 6 months (18) *	5	28	3	17	10	55
6 months to 1 year (19)	12	63	1	5	6	32
1 to 2 years (40)	21	52	2	5	17	43
3 to 5 years (50)	24	48	8	16	18	36
More than 5 years (97)	59	61	17	18	21	21

* One response was blank for preference in the less than 6 months range

Preferred Genres (Open-Ended Responses)

The Geauga County Public Library survey explored patron preferences regarding genres. Of the 225 total number of respondents, 184 (82%) responded. The top three categories of audiobooks that participants would like to see more of were mysteries, best sellers and romances. Forty-three percent or 79 participants said that they would like to see more mysteries in the library audiobook collection. Sixteen percent or 29 participants would like to see additional best sellers and 10% or 18 participants would like to see more romances. Other popular choices included the classics, self-help and science fiction.

About 9% of the respondents mentioned that they would like to see more of these in the library collection (See Appendix C.)

Helen Aron's 1992 survey conducted by Books-On-Tape, Inc., found that the most popular genre was best selling fiction, classics, mysteries, adventure, war and history and biography. In the 1996 Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana conducted an audiobook preference survey. The survey found that the most popular categories were fiction and suspense and mystery. Table 5 in this study notes that the top audiobook preferences were mystery/suspense, best seller, biography, history and current fiction. These data indicate that mysteries and best sellers are very popular and that the participants would like to see more of them in the collection. Also mentioned but not as popular were the classics, self-help and history.

Observations Concerning the Current GCPL Collection

Participants were asked to make any comments or suggestions that they may have on audiobooks at the Geauga County Public Library. Of the total 225 participants, 100 (44%) responded to this question. The responses were divided into three categories: compliments, complaints and comments/suggestions. Of the 100 responses, 31% had compliments for the library and its services. These ranged from "great job", "very pleased" to "exceptional selection". Fourteen percent had some complaints such as "the top shelf is too high for perusing titles" or "the theft strip got caught in my car tape player". Fifty-three percent had comments or suggestions and this area varied in responses such as "need more unabridged", "more non-fiction on people and events", and "we need a list showing titles available for abridged and unabridged" (See Appendix D.)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A self-administered survey was conducted at the Geauga County Public Library in Geauga County, Ohio. The purpose of the survey was to determine patron audiobook format preference and to examine whether format preference changed over time. The unabridged format was favored by over half of the participants, while the abridged format was favored by only 13%. In addition, over 75% of the patrons said that they would like to see more unabridged audiobooks in the library collection. Only 35% favored more abridged selections. This would indicate that the library should consider adding more unabridged audiobooks to their collection.

Of the 225 participants, 65% were female and 32% were male. This may be because more women than men listen to audiobooks or that the male patrons are not as aware of the collection. Another explanation is that during the two-week period that the survey was conducted, more women than men utilized the library. The library should continue to serve the female audiobook users, while trying to increase the number of male users. This could be achieved by increasing awareness of the non-fiction collection, especially business and self-help titles. It has been found that male audiobook users tend to resist fiction and prefer these types of titles (Oder, 1998). The library could create fliers listing non-fiction audiobook collection and feature displays of these types of titles.

The majority of the survey respondents falls into the baby boom category (36-54) and has not hit retirement age. Therefore, it could be concluded that many are still working and using audiobooks during their commute to and from work. There was less representation of younger and older participants. Only 11% who participated were age

18-35. This age group may be listening to music on the radio or CD's in their cars instead of listening to audiobooks. They may not be familiar with the audiobook collection and this could be remedied by creating fliers and displays to advertise the collection. About 10% of the respondents were 65 years of age or older. This age group may no longer drive their own cars. Transportation may have been an issue. Senior citizens may not have been in the library during the survey and therefore, were unable to fill it out. This age group who may have eyesight difficulties could benefit from learning more about the audiobook collection. Again, this could be achieved by displaying items and making sure that staff that do homebound visits are knowledgeable with the collection. One patron suggested that the library create an audiobook flier that contained titles, genres and format information (abridged or unabridged). This would be helpful to all patrons, especially the homebound or elderly who may not be able to visit the library.

The genre that was most favored was mysteries. Also popular were best sellers, biographies, history and general/current fiction. However, 10 other categories were fairly popular and mentioned on at least 12% of the surveys. The mystery genre was also the most popular preference when patrons were asked what categories of audiobooks they would like to see more of the library. These results indicate that the library should purchase more mystery titles while maintaining a wide variety of other categories. The library could utilize displays, creative fliers and press releases to promote the collection and any new titles it may have recently purchased. An audiobook discussion club could be formed that would be similar to a book discussion group. This could possibly generate interest in the audiobook collection, introduce the participants to different genre and increase the circulation.

There is some evidence that suggests that patrons who have been using audiobooks longer have a preference for the unabridged format. Patrons who had been listening longer than 6 months, had a much higher preference for the unabridged format. This may be because after six months of use, patrons have more knowledge of the audiobook collection. Or it may be that they have tried the abridged format and have decided that they prefer the unabridged format. The preference for unabridged did not seem to increase over time after that point. Patrons who have been listening for 1 year had almost the same preference for the unabridged format as those patrons who had listened for more than 5 years. It may be that after six months to one year of use, patrons have become committed to their preference.

The shift in preference over time seemed to apply primarily to those who initially preferred abridged audiobooks. The patrons who initially preferred unabridged, did not change their preference. Patrons who initially preferred abridged or didn't have a preference, tended to change their preference to unabridged. This data seems to suggest that once the audiobook user has found the unabridged format, they tend to stay with it.

The patrons at the Geauga County Public Library clearly enjoy listening to audiobooks. They continue to expect a varied selection of both abridged and unabridged titles. They would like to see the library expand the collection by including more mysteries and other genre. Overall, they are pleased with the service that the library offers.

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APPENDIX A

Geauga County Public Library

AUDIOBOOK USER PREFERENCE SURVEY

Please fill out this survey to the best of your knowledge. The purpose of this survey is to determine audiobook patron preference. The results will be used to aid in audiobook selection. A copy of survey results will be available upon request at all Geauga County Public Libraries.

PLEASE CHECK *ONE* ANSWER:

1. How long have you been an audiobook user?
   ____ Less than 6 months
   ____ 6 months-1 year
   ____ 1 to 2 years
   ____ 3 to 5 years
   ____ More than 5 years

2. In the last 60 days how many audiobooks have you checked out?
   ____ 1 - 3
   ____ 4 - 6
   ____ 7 - 10
   ____ More than 10

PLEASE CHECK UP TO *THREE* CHOICES PER QUESTION:

3. What categories of **fiction** audiobook do you prefer to listen to?

____Best seller	____Old radio shows	____Classics
____General/current fiction	____Poetry	____Western
____Mystery/suspense	____Inspirational	____Action/adventure
____Romance	____Science fiction	____Comedy

   ____Other: _____

4. What categories of **non-fiction** audiobook do you prefer to listen to?

____General non-fiction	____History	____Travel
____How-to	____Biography	____Foreign language
____Self help	____Other: _____	

PLEASE CHECK *ONE* ANSWER:

5. What type of audiobook do you prefer to listen to?
   ____ Unabridged (full-length version)
   ____ Abridged (edited version)
   ____ Don't prefer one over the other

PLEASE TURN THIS SHEET OVER

6. When you **first started** listening to audiobooks, which type did you prefer?
   ____ Unabridged (full-length version)
   ____ Abridged (edited version)
   ____ Didn't have a preference

7. Would you like to see more **abridged** (edited version) audiobooks in the library collection?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No

8. Would you like to see more **unabridged** (full-length version) audiobooks in the library collection?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No

PLEASE FILL IN THE BLANK:

9. What categories of audiobooks would you like to see more of in the library? (For example, mysteries, romance, self-help) _____
   _____
   _____

10. Please make any comments or suggestions that you may have about audiobooks at the Geauga County Public Library. _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

PLEASE CHECK *ONE* ANSWER:

11. Age:
    ____ 18-25
    ____ 26-35
    ____ 36-45
    ____ 46-55
    ____ 56-65
    ____ 66+

12. Gender:
    ____ Male
    ____ Female

Please place your completed survey in the box at the circulation desk. Thank you for your time in completing this survey.

APPENDIX B

School of Library and Information Science
(330) 672-2782
Fax (330) 672-7965
http://www.slis.kent.edu

Kent STATE UNIVERSITY
P. O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

Re: Audiobook format: A Patron's Choice

September 1999

Dear Audiobook User:

I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. As a part of the requirement for my master's degree I am conducting a study on patron audiobook use and format preference. I am conducting a patron survey, using a self-administered questionnaire at the Geauga County Public Libraries. The data obtained from this study will help me to determine whether patron use of audiobooks and preferences for a particular format changes over time. The results from this survey would be helpful for selection purposes and patron service needs.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. No names will be used in this survey and I will be the only one to have access to the survey data. There is no penalty of any kind should you choose not to participate in or withdraw from this study. While your cooperation is necessary to the success of this study, it is voluntary. A copy of the results of this study will be made available to you. Copies will be made available upon request to anyone who participates in this study.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (440) 285-0856 or Dr. Richard Rubin, my research advisor at Kent State University (330) 672-2782. This project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. M. Thomas Jones, telephone (330) 672-2851.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Kelly Connors
305 Hilltop Drive
Chardon, Ohio 44024

Sincerely,

Kelly Connors
Graduate Student

APPENDIX C
OPEN-ENDED QUESTION 9: RESPONSES

"What categories of audiobooks would like to see more of in the library? (For example, mysteries, romance, self-help)".

1	Mysteries, historical novels
2	Well written full length (unabridged) mysteries such as Ruth Rendel (B. Vine) English – E. George Colin Dexter etc. or similar types.
3	Best sellers
4	Westerns
5	Science Fiction
6	Romance
7	[blank]
8	Sci-fiction, self-help
9	Mysteries, suspense
10	sci-fic and mystery suspense – more unabridged titles
11	Best sellers, mysteries
12	mysteries, classics, thrillers
13	selection & variety seem good
14	Additional Mystery books on tape
15	Mysteries, adventure
16	mysteries, adventure
17	true crime – mysteries
18	New & old radio theatre
19	Historical Fiction, mysteries and sci-fi, short stories anthologies
20	Mysteries
21	Romance – self help
22	Christian
23	[blank]
24	mysteries
25	mysteries
26	mysteries
27	current bestsellers
28	never used before so don't know
29	Good selection
30	[blank]
31	Mystery, Best Seller Fiction- Classics- Current Fiction
32	historical novels
33	mysteries – best sellers
34	[blank]
35	New Editions
36	I would like to see more adventure & mystery, less horror
37	Old Time Radio – Comedy
38	Current Fiction – All Stephen King tapes
39	Fine as is

40 [blank]
41 Mysteries
42 Sports
43 I don't care what kind as long as you get more
44 I like books by Peritti, Thoene, LaHaye Price – Christian Publishers. I stop listening when I hear obscene-type comments or lots of taking God's name as a swear word. Not worth wasting my X.
45 Mysteries
46 Mysteries
47 All
48 [blank]
49 Mysteries
50 mysteries, adventure
51 romance, comedy, musical stories, mysteries
52 Westerns & History
53 mysteries
54 science fiction
55 [blank]
56 [blank]
57 Best sellers, general fiction, mysteries, classics and action/adventure
58 Classics – unabridged
59 mysteries
60 Classics
61 Non-fiction in general: audiobooks that teach – books which allow me learn, learn about our world, other worlds, life.
62 romance – classics
63 [blank]
64 [blank]
65 memoirs
66 Mystery, Historical
67 Fiction – Mysteries new & the classics (ie Agatha Christie), gene. fiction.
68 true mysteries with less bad language. Historical Cleveland
69 Mysteries & Suspense
70 All except poetry & inspirational
71 Mysteries, Best Sellers
72 Fantasy
73 self-help
74 Mystery//Spy Novels suspense
75 Don't care
76 mysteries, romance
77 sci-fi
78 Mysteries
79 Action/adventure, mysteries, current fiction
80 Unabridged classics
81 [blank]
82 Mysteries, romance, detective

83 Romance, mysteries
84 [blank]
85 [blank]
86 Mystery
87 [blank]
88 mysteries, action/adventure, classics
89 Mystery & Western
90 Unabridged- Old radio/TV shows/ Biographies/ Fiction
91 Historical & Mysteries
92 Mysteries
93 Mysteries & Sci-Fi
94 Mysteries & Suspense Tony Hillerman & similar
95 [blank]
96 Best Sellers
97 Biographies
98 mysteries, romance
99 I listen to a variety of books on tape and am glad to see any new titles
100 [blank]
101 Classics
102 mysteries, romance
103 [blank]
104 Romances/Science Fiction
105 mysteries
106 Educational, i.e. natural history museum; National Geographic; Informational Books on The Body, The Ocean, Space, Earth Sciences
107 mysteries
108 mysteries, fiction
109 mysteries, romance
110 Science & Nature
111 Biographies, Histories, Travel and all non-fiction. Please keep bringing out not alone current books but "classics" from the past that we had to read for school, etc. and really didn't get to enjoy and would appreciate now for their style of writing.
112 [blank]
113 [blank]
114 [blank]
115 Books by Stephen King, Anne Rule, more mysteries. Dean Koontz
116 mysteries & self-help
117 mysteries
118 History – Science
119 [blank]
120 [blank]
121 Mysteries- Religious Novels- Romances
122 [blank]
123 Best Sellers, Mysteries
124 [blank]

125 Mysteries Romance
126 Mysteries
127 All
128 mysteries
129 Mysteries
130 Self-help & Medical/Science
131 Everything- These are a great source of time savers.
132 [blank]
133 [blank]
134 Self-help
135 Sci-fi, Educational
136 romance
137 mysteries
138 Self help motivational
139 [blank]
140 Self-help & School text
141 [blank]
142 Best selle list N.Y.
143 [blank]
144 History of Science
145 [blank]
146 [blank]
147 [blank]
148 classics, mysteries, science fiction
149 More recent books/best sellers
150 History
151 Science fiction/fantasy
152 Self-help – home study – educational
153 History, biographies, classic works & good children's books.
154 Best Sellers
155 Mystery
156 doing a good job
157 [blank]
158 mystery, adventure
159 Self help and inspirational
160 Mysteries, horror
161 Mysteries, Medical Mystery
162 Mysteries, romances, current best sellers (not weird)
163 I like to see them all displayed.
164 Historical memoirs
165 Current Best Sellers
166 Fantasy
167 tapes that follow curriculum material at school
168 mysteries, Sci Fi
169 Mysteries
170 Mysteries, Self Help

171 Best Sellers
172 Best Sellers
173 Unabridged romance & mysteries
174 Books by Christian authors
175 Top sellers
176 Mysteries
177 Mystery, Romance, Self help
178 biography
179 Sci-Fi
180 ?
181 How To, Best Sellers
182 general/current fiction
183 Best Sellers, Children's classics
184 best sellers
185 Classics, Sherlock Holmes mysteries, Historical Biography, Military History
186 [blank]
187 Self-help
188 mysteries, Best Sellers
189 [blank]
190 Best seller
191 Adventure, mystery
192 Possibly political non-fiction and anthologies of Nationally Syndicated Columnists
193 History
194 Current Fiction
195 Mysteries
196 A Variety
197 On CD- Rather then tape
198 fantasy/science fiction
199 Mysteries
200 Biography, Suspense, Self Help, History
201 Sports & Politics
202 Science Fiction
203 Science Fiction Medical Thriller
204 [blank]
205 mysteries
206 Best Sellers Action
207 [blank]
208 Mysteries/Suspense
209 Classics & self help, Childrens stories
210 Mystery/Suspense – Humor
211 Current Best Sellers & New Selections
212 I seem to find mysteries, romance available. I'd like more recent non-fiction (Self-help/diets/biographies).
213 Best sellers, self help
214 Adventure

215 [blank}
216 Best Sellers, mysteries
217 Spirituality, religion/theology
218 Parenting Self help
219 condense with current fiction from "Best Seller" list
220 Best sellers- popular fiction
221 [blank]
222 [blank]
223 Romance
224 good selection
225 [blank]

APPENDIX D
OPEN-ENDED QUESTION 10: RESPONSES

"Please make any comments or suggestions that you may have about audiobooks at the Geauga County Public Library".

1 need more unabridged
2 Really glad to see how during the past years the supply of audiobooks for the public has increased. Get more! - One type I have found to be an absolute waste of money are the audiobooks based on movies, they are poorly written and basically a rip off.
3 [blank]
4 The theft strip got caught in my car tape player. It took tweezers etc. to get it out. Fortunately the player is OK.
5 That they enforce people rewinding the tapes before they are brought back.
6 [blank]
7 [blank]
8 I would like to see more self-help and sci-fiction.
9 Not a big enough selection.
10 [blank]
11 [blank]
12 Please add more books on CD
13 Please buy more
14 [blank]
15 exceptional selection
16 Have to really watch when the cassette tapes get worn from continuous listening they need to be changed - if people had trouble with their cassette tapes need to make librarians aware. I have been in middle of audiobook and the tape was so worn I couldn't listen to the rest of the story.
17 true crime, mysteries
18 [blank]
19 Larger selection would be good
20 [blank]
21 [blank]
22 [blank]
23 Best sellers - Young Adult - Children Awards - Classics
24 [blank]
25 [blank]
26 [blank]
27 [blank]
28 reference system to find them more easily.
29 Very Pleased
30 [blank]
31 Want more unabridged tapes!
32 The top shelf is much too high if one is perusing titles and authors. Not the largest selection. Often must borrow from stock in other county libraries.

33 [blank]
34 [blank]
35 [blank]
36 We use audiobooks when we take long car trips. It helps keep us calm and occupied. Personally listen to tapes while I do chores. The stories make the time go faster.
37 [blank]
38 Would like to see an increase in both Fiction and NF
39 [blank]
40 [blank]
41 [blank]
42 [blank]
43 [blank]
44 My experience have all been positive w/Geauga County.
45 [blank]
46 [blank]
47 [blank]
48 [blank]
49 Would like more Agatha Christie mysteries - If there are anymore!
50 [blank]
51 How to find them easier by subject listed
52 Keep rotating books
53 [blank]
54 [blank]
55 [blank]
56 [blank]
57 Good collection. Some older ones are not in good condition.
58 great selection - thanks
59 they are great - Wish more authors represented. Not trashy ones.
60 [blank]
61 [blank]
62 Complete works by an author are helpful. I like to continue on with series.
63 [blank]
64 [blank]
65 [blank]
66 [blank]
67 Books I don't always have patience to read - I can listen to. I'm an emp. at GW & need to keep up w/newer Bks.- I'll listen to romance & some other fiction!
68 Clean up the sex & the bad language. It is very disgusting
69 They have a very nice selection but have too many abridged. I always pass them up if I can.
70 I would like to see the collection growing
71 I find that the reader makes a great deal of difference. Sometimes it seems more important than the material.
72 [blank]
73 More opera on tape!

74 I enjoy what you have
75 [blank]
76 I really enjoy listening to the books on tape!
77 More Books on CD's
78 All OK
79 I would like to see more unabridged audiobooks
80 [blank]
81 [blank]
82 Not enough new mysteries. Don't always have them on tape
83 Not always the most recent books out are on audiotape
84 [blank]
85 [blank]
86 They're doing a great job expanding the audiobook section
87 excellent selection
88 I am so thankful for the variety and additions of new selections. Keep up the good work!
89 Good Selection - Enjoy Books on Tape on a daily basis.
90 [blank]
91 [blank]
92 [blank]
93 [blank]
94 Too many abridged books in collection - need more unabridged & more total number of books in collection
95 Satisfactory
96 [blank]
97 [blank]
98 More top sellers e.g. Danielle Steel, Stephen King
99 I like a display of new arrivals (see W. Geauga Branch). Books on tape purchased in the last 2-3 months
100 [blank]
101 [blank]
102 Have key ring cards in Chardon
103 I find them hard to see - would be nice if they were up together and titles clearer
104 [blank]
105 [blank]
106 More non-fiction books and People and events
107 [blank]
108 More would be nice
109 [blank]
110 [blank]
111 I love them & use them constantly & couldn't live without them - so any expansion of this section has my approval
112 [blank]
113 A huge improvement from years ago!
114 [blank]
115 There is not a very big selection at all

116 [blank]
117 Your doing a good job! As it. Thank you
118 [blank]
119 [blank]
120 [blank]
121 Okay
122 [blank]
123 [blank]
124 [blank]
125 [blank]
126 [blank]
127 Very helpful - need to expand inventory
128 [blank]
129 [blank]
130 Would like more best sellers on cassette or CD
131 They have a good variety They might have a flyer for purchasing some of the cassettes.
132 [blank]
133 [blank]
134 [blank]
135 As an artist myself, I feel that abridging a book is like turning the Mona Lisa into a stick drawing.
136 [blank]
137 [blank]
138 [blank]
139 [blank]
140 It would be nice to have more than one copy of the item
141 [blank]
142 None/They do a great job
143 [blank]
144 [blank]
145 [blank]
146 More unabridged!
147 [blank]
148 [blank]
149 Do not have enough best sellers
150 [blank]
151 If they don't do it yet, the library should rotate the audiobook inventory through the different branches (the way they currently do with videos)
152 The more the merrier
153 It would be wonderful if there were greater availability of books on CD through the library system. There would be less wear and tear problems with the recordings and the sound quality would be better. They also take less space on the shelves.
154 [blank]
155 [blank]

156 none
157 [blank]
158 check tapes every so often - often find defective one
159 I think is a great thing.
160 Great Selection!
161 Need more Young Adult on Audiobooks
162 I have really enjoyed the selection since I started coming here two years ago but I'm running out of selections
163 Just keep supplying a wide array of audio books. Makes for good listening for very long drive time.
164 More L. Block and History
165 [blank]
166 [blank]
167 [blank]
168 The collection should be enlarged & rotated between branches!
169 I think the selection at Bainbridge is the best & biggest of any county libraries both Geauga and Cuyahoga.
170 We need a list showing the titles available & if abridged or non abridged Need the audiobooks in a better access- two rows too close to floor. Difficult for a person with low vision to access.
171 [blank]
172 [blank]
173 too many old ones on the shelves
174 Thanks for providing them
175 [blank]
176 [blank]
177 They have a wonderful selection & I use the audio books in preference to the book itself
178 [blank]
179 Hard time sorting through on shelf
180 I use these when I travel by car - also check out books for my 87 year old mom - it's a great service.
181 Good Job, folks!
182 A great way to get to work & home where I control what I listen to, not whatever the DJ decides.
183 More, more, more!
184 [blank]
185 Better education on how to browse
186 Love to see many more unabridged
187 [blank]
188 I'm so pleased that we have such a nice collection. I wish that they could be inspected frequently to insure that they are in good condition before we check them out.
189 [blank]
190 [blank]
191 [blank]

192 Please! Ensure the labels on the cassettes don't come loose - they can really mess up a cassette deck!
193 I am grateful to have access to audiobooks. It's more difficult now to find interesting new audiobooks. Please get more.
194 [blank]
195 [blank]
196 I like variety
197 [blank]
198 [blank]
199 [blank]
200 [blank]
201 Please get more tapes of any kind. Thanks!
202 [blank]
203 I love the way they rotate in the system and they have so many!
204 Unabridged
205 Good Selection
206 [blank]
207 [blank]
208 [blank]
209 [blank]
210 [blank]
211 [blank]
212 I listen daily in my car. I love audio books!
213 [blank]
214 [blank]
215 [blank]
216 Great service at Bainbridge
217 [blank]
218 [blank]
219 Add: Kathleen & Michael Gear - People of_____series - only have seen 2 here. Increase # of Books on CD's
220 [blank]
221 [blank]
222 [blank]
223 Would like to see more on CD's
224 [blank]
225 [blank]